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ABSTRACT

Because the criteria, procedures, and goals of both the discipline (research) and the profession (teaching) of sociology are similar, the teaching of sociology may be vastly improved by exploiting the discipline in which sociologists are trained. First, the extension of reliable knowledge about societal issues is a criterion of both teaching and research. Also, the process of both discipline and profession should be inquiry; good questions in the classroom and in research result in a search for multiple conditions and causes and stimulate the process of inquiry. Finally, the goals of the discipline and the profession are both the transmission and the discovery of knowledge. Thus, in order to realize the potential for superlative instruction through the application of training as researchers, a radical revision of the teaching of sociology is required. The aim of a course, like that of research, would be to pursue a question that would entail both theory and methods. The course problem would be highlighted in the syllabus and students would register for a course in which they found the question compelling. Student inquiry would deal with methods: indicators, validity, reliability, and measurement. After assembling results, students would then consider extensions and applications of their findings. Publication of these findings would represent the culmination of the course and would reveal the department's record for that semester. (Author/KC)

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SOCIOLOGY: SCHOLARLY DISCIPLINE OR PROFESSION?

A statement introducing meetings of
the Section on Undergraduate Education
of the American Sociological Association,
Session 156, Chicago, Thursday,
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I am pinch hitting for Ray Mack since, for some obscure reason, he has chosen a holiday in Switzerland over the almost unbearable excitement of the ASA meetings. Luckily for me, you will never know what you missed today.[1] But one thing you will not miss is the title of his paper. For I've written to the question he posed: Sociology, Is it Discipline or Profession? It's a question that cries out for the clearcut answer I shall give, which is: Yes.

The Trinity makes 3 a sacred number. But the elemental number for generation, social as well as biological, is two. And for cognition; for the identification of an object seems to require at least one benchmark for comparison. (So it was that Louis Wirth used to say: were there only one moon, it might just as well be made of green cheese.)

But 2 is a dangerous number. Our first--and sometimes our last--disposition is to yin and yang. Events are good or evil. Elements are male or female. There is darkness and light. Sociology is a discipline or a profession. Not only is the simple dualism common. Customarily it separates the better from the worse. Research is a superior enterprise, teaching inferior. The first is undertaken by males and RA's, the second by females and TA's. As members of a discipline we know what we are doing; but as professors we see through a glass, darkly. Research merits the rewards of cash and perquisites; teaching has the solace of psychic income.[2]

I myself have been an accomplished yin-yanger, seeing achievement in either discipline or profession only at the cost of mediocrity in the other. I've argued that, as sociologists, we are carefully trained to

extend the domain of reliable knowledge. It is our credo that this is the task most worth doing. The discipline is bounded by the line separating those who create from those who transmit. To join the group of scholars who make up that creative community we must do research, read the journals and produce theses and dissertations, those behavioral templates for carving out the rest of a career. For it is fruitful inquiry that brings us our merit badges--renown, promotion, pay, tenure and travel. Federal funds and Foundation bounty affirm our conviction: it's the extension, not the transmission of knowledge that counts. Yearning, then, in the direction of the discipline while condemned to prosaic professional chores we live dismayingly ambivalent lives. Thus some of us who publish do so while our students perish. (It is still possible to perform miserably in the cloistered classroom and get away with it.) For others, the tension between counterdemanding roles means that neither gets decently done. So I argued, constructing, as you see, a 4-celled table in my mind's eye. A very few of us would do both good research and good teaching. Most would do both poorly. Those devoted to the task of the discipline would do the profession's chores inadequately and those committed to teaching would do little and poor research. In short, I made it a zero-sum game. Among those whom dual obligations don't paralyze, doing the one well will determine poor performance in the other.

Now there may be some justification for the view that, <u>in practice</u> discipline and profession are opposed, that adequacy in teaching and research <u>is</u> a zero sum matter. Two years ago Goldsmid, Gruber and I (1977) looked into this matter, testing the hypothesis that frequency of nomination for distinguished teaching awards (at the University of North Carolina)

is inversely related to measures of publication--i.e., contributions to the discipline). We compared the publishing records of faculty most often nominated for teachers' awards with those of their colleagues, of the same rank, in the same departments. We found that just under half of the assistant and associate professors--43 and 46%, respectively--had poorer publishing records than their counterparts. This might mean that, for them, the demands of teaching, and commitment to it, are indeed incompatible with demands of the discipline. (Of course it might mean that their performance will be but mediocre in both realms.)

But the findings for full professors were dramatically different. Only 14% had poorer publication records than their collagues in the same department. How can we explain the difference between them and their fellow faculty in the two lower ranks? It may be an instance of the fitter surviving, where fit means disciplinary prowess. That prowess is registered in the publication of research, yielding national visibility. In turn, the visibility is tangibly registered in job offers which can be used to spur local dignitaries to up the ante.

Or perhaps there's another explanation. Perhaps the two roles aren't antithetical, as I'd supposed. And perhaps with time (and changed circumstance) the two obligations can be dovetailed, or reconciled or, better still, can be made mutually reinforcing. It may be that the teaching task is easier for the full professor, course content closer to his specialty,[3] classes smaller, students more alike in background and aspirations. (We do have a perverse tendency to assign the most difficult teaching tasks to those with least experience.) And it may be that, with the passage of time, faculty learn better how to articulate what I once thought of as counterdemanding roles. Thus simultaneously they pay their devoirs to God and Caesar.

This last interpretation offers a clue, a corrective for the antithesis, discipline versus profession, research versus teaching. Simple dualisms, like simple bivariate analyses, may make good beginnings. But they surely make bad endings, except for the Billy Grahams and the Arafats of this world. To think in dichotomized, nominal variables is to oversimplify.[4] The categories are too gross. They aren't exclusive. They distort a complex social reality.

So it is with Discipline Or Profession. Not to move from nominal to ordinal to interval scales is to stop short of an adequately refined mapping of the social terrain. We need, instead, to follow the logic of an analysis of variance. Examining the ratio of variance within to variance between, we may find the boundaries between, eroding, and the overlap of the two domains quite considerable. This is what I shall argue, admitting, the while, that I am shaping the analysis to my own ends. For I shall be comparing the profession of sociology as it might be with the discipline of sociology as I take it to be.

In following this strategy I shall contend, first, that there is much overlap between discipline and profession in (1) criteria of importance that guide our activities, (2) in the procedures of seeking and teaching, and (3) in the goals of discovery and transmission. And I shall propose, finally, that we can resolve a false dilemma and vastly improve our professing by exploiting the discipline in which we've been trained.

Criteria of Importance in Discipline & Profession

Do discipline and profession differ on what's worth doing? Some might suggest that research begins with a question of some significance whereas teaching starts (and ends) with the delivery of an important truth.

Of course, neither teacher nor investigator would accept importance as a criterion unless we answer the question: What makes matters sought, or taught, important? In research, the inquiry is more important when it promises to adjudicate the claims of contending theories, when it promises to exte... general propositions to new populations or circumstances; or when, following observations at odds with current generalizations, it leads us to refute or revise inherited wisdom. Is it different with the professing of sociology?

Perhaps so, but if so, only unnecessarily and unfortunately. The importance of a matter treated in the classroom might well be measured in the same way. Does the classroom operation promise to revise, refine or refute lay wisdom? Does it help students adjudicate contending explanations? Does it raise propositions to higher levels of abs..action to embrace additional populations or events? I would argue that discipline and profession need not--should not--differ on this score; for the extension of reliable knowledge is a criterion of importance in both teaching and research.

Importance may be measured a second way. We may deem our work important insofar as it speaks to practical affairs. Teaching, if not research, should bear on mundane problems of the learners' lives. It should link, somehow, with issues of the day, with problems of preference and value. And sociologists, more than others, are professionally equipped to connect the discipline with our collective troubles. Good children of Durkheim, we know that offenses punished provide occasions for reaffirming threatened values. We know, too, that unpunished derelictions, the privilege of uncurbed power--invading Laos or Cambodia--

have a contrary effect; they erode the values that frame human

intercourse. One might hazard the hypothesis: the higher the status of the unpunished felon, c.p., the greater the threat to communal integrity.

We know very well that the virtues of free enterprise sung by Textron and Mobiloil assume equality of opportunity. We also know that for most blacks, most Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Amerinds and for millions of poor anglos, this is a fraudulent claim. Indeed, we know what a lit'ry person once told us: state Socialism, with its generous infusions of taxpayers' money, is for the rich; free enterprise for the poor.

We know the parochial character of class-linked visions of overselves and our society. We know that social isolation is one condition of stereotypical, fundamentalist rigidities. And we profess to liberate our students by opening a range of options among which they can make a reasoned and defensible choice.

These are moral issues. They are policy issues. They are matters which, in more detail, with more data and with great care to avoid lopsided indoctrination, should be part of the liberating function of sociology for UGs.

Perhaps you will agree in principle, if not with my particular examples. Matters of the better and the worse are proper issues that inform our work as professors of sociology. But as sociologists? Surely the discipline does not respond litmus-like to the current emphemeral public issues that fleetingly exercise the layman? The discipline, in contrast to the profession, takes the long view, the timeless perspective, devoting itself to those problems whose solutions will most advance our efforts to distill social reality in high level abstractions.

Well--if we really believe that the discipline takes such a high road, while the profession takes the low, we are simple innocents. Can we really believe that the ready market for research in urban sociology and human ecology is independent of persistent problems of the city? Do we see no connection between the burgeoning research in gerontology and NIH (and the advancing years of the senior, and most powerful Congressmen)? Can one suppose that extensive research in race relations has nothing to do with Martin Luther King and Henry Wallace? or RANN? That the research of the well travelled demographer is untouched by ILO, the Executive Office, the Population Council or the Ford Foundation? Or that medical sociology has nothing to do with NSF, NIH, NIMH and all the other lovely sources of research mazuma?

There is indeed more overlap than difference between discipline and profession in criteria of importance. Much, if not most, research reflects societal issues. So. likewise, ... in teaching.

Seeking and Telling Two Different Processes?

Perhaps criteria of importance, the extension of reliable knowledge and its pertinence to social issues, need not separate discipline and profession. But how about the process itself? Does not the one inquire, the other report? Is it not true that as members of a discipline we create knowledge, while as professors we transmit it?

It may be, but it ain't necessarily, so. To the extent that it does distinguish the two realms, in practice, it's too, too bad. And perhaps it often is--bad. Tillich was probably right: our tendency as professors is to throw answers like rocks at the heads of those who have not yet asked the questions. But tendency and practice are

not justifications. Surely the aim of education, like that of research, is to get answers, however tentative, to significant questions. It's doubtless true that our teaching is too often in the declaratory, rather than the interrogative mood. Our syllabi and the readings we require hang a set of assertions on a framework of topics. Our lectures, too, may be curiously short of question marks. But it need not--should not--be so.

Indeed, there's every reason that teaching be otherwise and, in being otherwise, more closely match the process of inquiry we call research. I've never heard disputed the general proposition offered by John Dewey in Human Nature and Conduct (1916). He asserts that emotion is generated, thought stimulated only when the smooth flow of familiar events is interrupted--that is to say, when questions intrude. Were it not so, were every problem solved before it broke into our consciousness, we would be reduced to the condition of vegetables--or perhaps to that inanimate life our students resemble when we talk them into a coma. Good teaching and learning, like good research, depend on some sort of cognitive dissonance, on discrepancies, contradictions, possibilities at odds with actualities.

The process of teaching, like the process of research, requires us to pose questions that cause trouble (dissonance). Whether as investigators or teachers, we will go answer-hunting when we've posed questions. Otherwise not. Good questions, in the classroom as in research, require us to assemble cases--from the field, from the lab., from personal experience--for analysis. Good questions will lead the inquirer to look for multiple conditions and causes, for latent as well as manifest concomitants. Good questions will compare answers derived

from controlled observation with those based on casual observation. Good questions will stimulate a process of inquiry which is open and can be replicated by anyone seeking to assess the adequacy of the answer. In these and other ways, the careful pursuit of significant questions reduces the spurious contrast of discipline and profession.

Are Discovery and Transmission Two Different Goals?

We often identify the purpose of the discipline as discovery, that of the profession as transmission. Does that mean there is no transmission in research? no discovery in teaching?

If it is to be successful, research must add to a pre-existing base. The typical review of the literature in the background part of a research report points to that base, indicating where we stand. This is certainly transmission. On the other hand the development of fresh views, the generation of new hypotheses in a class session may certainly be discovery.

You might allege that scientists do research and teachers talk about it. But even that is an overdrawn contrast. For a very large part--in some ways the most important part--of the research process is the thinking through of where we stand and what might be. This is the sort of thinking-through that must occur in a course adequately taught. As to the doing, laboratory or field work can be crucial aspects of a well crafted course. The study of migratory workers by Bill Friedland and his Cornell students is a case in point. One might view Laboratory work in the biophysical sciences as simply a replication of what's already known--hence a case of transmission, unalloyed. But some good research is also replication. A finding that confirms past findings need

not be an insignificant finding. Furthermore, we sometimes hear of actual research done through a course--research on new populations and sometimes testing new hypotheses. Such was the case in the Berkeley study undertaken by Arlie Hochschild and David Nasatir. So, also, the work of Laurence Wylie and his students in a community study in Brittany.

So, even as to goals, a thoughtful scrutiny reveals much overlap between discipline and profession. Collaborative inquiry is the heart of each activity.

Wanting, but badly wanted: a radically new orientation to instruction in sociology

I once wrote that as instructors we don't know what we're doing. That's still true. Few of us know what, how or why our students think what they do when they enter our courses. And we're nearly as uninformed when they leave.

But I was wrong about the reason for this. It does not result from the rigidity or esoteric nature of our training. It is not owing to an unbridgeable gulf concocted when we assert a spurious split between discipline and profession, research and teaching. On the contrary, it is because we fail to see the potential for superlative instruction through the application of our training as sociologists. We've been mistaken in seeing teaching and research as contending, incompatible roles. If they are in fact so defined, they need not be--must not be if we are to profess competently. How shall we rid ourselves of this false and needless dilemma?

The solution is this; we require a radical revision of the professing of sociology--i.e., the teaching role. It is a revision that

would take as its model the research role in which we are trained. It would substitute a lot of doing for a lot of talking about. It would minimize the transmission of Truth from omniscient and omnipotent to ignorant and weak. It would renounce the witless instructional pattern practiced when we implicitly assume that listening is learning, telling is teaching. Its stress would be on collaborative inquiry, with instructor as principal investigator. It would entail the transmission of pertinent data chiefly through reading and other experiences arranged by the instructor, but undertaken largely outside the brain-storming sessions and laboratory work comprising class operations. Never ? well hardly ever would the instructor repeat what was in the printed word. The aim of the course, like that of research, would be to pursue a big question, with its complement of subsidiary questions.

As in the case of research, it would entail both theory and methods. Theory would provide a tentative answer to the central question(s); and methods would be invoked to check the adequacy of that theory through empirical probing. As in the case of research, the teaching would be more adequate to the extent that it led the inquirer to discover similarities in apparently different events and populations. As with research, the instruction would have additional significance to the extent that general findings, applied to mundane affairs, might suggest changes in policy and practice. As in research, instruction would take on a triadic form: A and B (instructor and student) versus the problem, C, rather than the too frequent diadic relationship, A against B. As in research, the operation would be open and public, exploiting every resource that might contribute to a solution. It would be open, too, as research is--perhaps even more so--in the publication of findings.

What would be entailed in such a radical rapprochement of discipline and profession? First off, our course would start (and probably end) with a central question. The course problem would be highlighted in the syllabus. Students would register for a course if they found such questions as these compelling. How does parental class position affect the aspirations and destinations of their children? How do we explain the ubiquitous town-gown tensions found in university communities? How does one account for certain frozen procedures in such bureaucratic organizations as this college or university? What are the consequences? How do people vary in the extent to which they would assign women a protected and inferior role? How can we explain such variation?

I believe that there is no question posed or pursued by a member of the discipline that does not have its counterpart in the experience of those to whom we profess sociology. But of course not all questions are equally salient for all investigators; and this would certainly be true of our students. Hence it's imperative that students be self-selected for our courses, knowing--those who come to them--what the issue is that dominates the semester's work. At this point discipline and profession meet; for we would be professing in the light of the disciplinary wisdom that asserts: the success of organizational outcomes depends on careful, selective recruiting. Hence the success of a course, the reputation of the department (and, in a small way, of the discipline) is largely determined by self selection before the course ever starts.

For most problems there are ready answers--too ready. They come from idiosyncratic personal experience, from holy writ and other traditional sources and, of course, from pertinent prior research. These explanations (theories) need to be sorted and weighed. We would be particularly pleased

to have two plausible but incompatible explanations, one of which our classroom inquiry might sustain over the other.

Then, in classroom inquiry as in research we must deal with the questions: What indicators can we use for the variables embodied in the theory? How can we assess the validity of these indices? their reliability? How can we take their measures? On occasion we will advance the cause of our own research with students' imaginative contributions. We can borrow ideas not only from our sagacious peers. Sometimes out of the mouths of babes and sucklings come preternatural insights that enlighten us.

We must ask, too: How shall we define the population, if any, to be studied? I say "if any" because I would leave the door open for all sorts of research using historical sources, literary material, court records, land use records, field data, small group laboratory studies and the like. With undergraduates I'd be more interested in the plausibility of the generalization than the stipulation of a pertinent population. (Obviously, the question of the legitimate span of the generalization must needs be thought about.)

When, toward the end of the semester, findings are assembled, two other critical questions emerge. We ask about extension and the application of our findings. As to the first: if we can now describe and explain better than we could before, are there other classes of behavior that might be better understood by the same proposition(s)? Extension is a prime criterion of importance in research. So might and ought it to be in our professing. *We know more, and better, when we see the same process, oxidation, in the burning match and rusting nail.*

Keniston's theory that alienation stems from absence of a same-sex role model, and lack of a stake in the system, is much more telling when it embraces both poor blacks and rich whites, such as those who were his subjects at Harvard. The Whiting, Kluckhohn and Anthony study linking violent puberty rites with protracted dependency of male child on mother becomes much more powerful (and pertinent) when it is extended to include gang rumbles in Manhattan or Chicago.

The second question is not so clearly one drawn from discipline in the service of profession. Yet increasingly on grounds both moral and practical, sociologists are impelled to think about the implications of their findings for practical affairs.[5] What does it mean for public policy and legislation that we confront, again, a Malthusian disparity between available resources and the bodies to consume them? What does it mean, in practical terms, that recorded law breakers are heavily concentrated in younger age groups? How do we explain why, on Bastille Day in Manhattan, some people looted, others didn't? What are the practical implications of the finding that welfare expenditures are inversely related to level of employment and other measures of prosperity?

Finally, let us do as professors what we must do as members of a discipline. Let us make public our findings. A department's record for a semester would then be clearly revealed in its publication of course findings for that semester. These would disclose most candidly the blind alleys, the roadblocks, the unanticipated outcomes, reversals of convictions,

skills that were lacking, as well as confirmations, serendipitous outcomes, refinement and extension of propositions. As in research, the publication of work already done would set the stage for future work. What the instructor--the principal investigator--had attempted would be known, enabling succeeding instructors to build on it, so improving the possibility of genuinely cumulative learning for our students.

* * *

In sum, I propose that we banish the conjunction. It is not a matter of discipline or profession. This is a false antithesis. If research and teaching have been at odds, it is because we have failed to exploit our training in the discipline in the service of the profession. But suppose we did. Consider each course a research project. Consider each syllabus a set of questions framing a course of inquiry. Consider transmission of data and ideas as handmaiden to the quest, as means not ends. Needed data are transmitted through self-teaching techniques, by exploiting materials and procedures (such as Keller schemes) devised by the instructor. But the core of professing comes to resemble that of the discipline: the disciplined search for reliable knowledge. The outcomes of inquiry are of course reported. And so it would be with each course.

Dawn and dusk, where light and darkness overlap, hold more promise than noon or midnight. We would do better not to yin and yang about sociology. It is not hard to see how the framework of inquiry that marks the discipline can be readily codified in a scheme that vitalizes the professing of sociology. At base it requires a radical reorientation of our teaching. And that, in turn, requires great commitment. But such commitment, I gather, some of us must have. Otherwise we'd not be here.

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